F Paul 12/27/75

Jack Anderson's Washington Merry-go-round —With Les Whit

WASHINGTON — In violation of a United Nations agreement, the Soviet Union is continuing its secret research into germ warfare.

At the same time, the United States is keeping its pledge to destroy biological weapons.

Both nations have developed new virus and rickettsia strains against which the world has no immunity. This has been achieved by using chemicals, radiation, ultraviolet light and other agents to produce freaks or mutants.

A dozen enemy agents with spray guns could spread enough germs across the country to cause an epidemic that could destroy crops, kill off livestock or wipe out hundreds of thousands of people.

One expert has estimated that 10 planes, each loaded with 10,000 pounds of dry biological warfare material, could scatter enough bacteria over the United States to knock out one-third of the population.

Under a United Nations convention, therefore, the United States, Soviet Union and other nations agreed to destroy their biological stocks. Congressional investigators disclosed last September that the Central Intelligence Agency had defied a presidential order and was still hoarding deadly toxins.

The loudest protests came from Moscow. The Soviet newspaper Izvestia condemned the CIA's "criminal practices." Moscow Radio howled at the "crude violations" of the UN germ warfare convention.

From top intelligence sources, however, we have established that the Soviets stepped up their own efforts to produce lethal germs at the same time that they were denouncing the United States. (The CIA, meanwhile, has complied with the President's directive).

The Soviet Embassy's chief medical diplomat, Dr. Vyacheslav Stepanov, has tried to weasel suspicious information from at least three U.S. government scientists.

The three attended a genetic symposium last February at Asilomar, Calif. Stepanov was not present, but other Soviet scientists heard the Americans discuss "genetics engineering." This can be used to create new animal breeds and insect strains.

For example, bacteria could be created that would be resistant to any known drugs. There would be no way, theoretically, to stop these killer germs from wiping out entire populations.

After the California meeting, Stepanov began courting some of the U.S. scientists who had attended. Top intelligence sources describe the bluff, articulate Stepanov as more than a simple scientist; he is also a suspected KGB operative.

His efforts to elicit information that could help the Soviets advance their germ warfare research were obvious. Some of the Americans, therefore, spoke to the security office at the National Institutes of Health. The FBI was notified.

Our intelligence sources told us flatly that Stepanov isn't interested merely in academic research but is gathering intelligence. One source said that Stepanov is trying to "turn" some American scientist, that is to persuade him to defect or to pass information to the embassy.

He is also watching the movements of the U.S. scientists. If they should gather at some medical facility, it would alert the Soviets of a possible new development in genetics.

Footnote: Dr. Stepanov conceded to us that he had spoken to U.S. scientists and that the information he sought could be used for both "positive and negative" purposes. But he insisted that his interest was purely "positive." He refused to comment on whether he was providing information to the KGB. Such questions, he said, are a "povocation."

CEREAL STORY: An internal House memo accuses the Agriculture Department and Government Printing Office of spending tens of thousands of dollars to promote General Mills, the cereal giant.

General Mills has prepared a children's nutritional booklet, entitled "The Thing the Professor Forgot," which is being offered on 40 million cereal boxes.

But the Agriculture Department, not General Mills, is printing and distributing the booklet. Thus the taxpayers are footing the bill for a massive General Mills promotion.

The House memo, prepared for Rep. Benjamin Rosenthal, [illegible] that the Agriculture D[epartment] shelled out $71,000 to pr[int] Mills' booklet and that t[he] Printing Office is also General Mills' custom expense. The mailing c[ost] well over $100,000.

As a legal nicety, the[y] to the public as an offi[cial] publication. But a[n] Department spokesma[n] that, in view of the promotion, 90 per cent going to its cereal custo[mer]

Charges the House appears to be a con[spiracy] conceal General Mill[s'] project. Plus a not-too-s[ubtle] the cereal manufactur[er] image of nutrition c[an] virtue of advertising f[or] booklets on its products.

The booklet neglects what products they shou[ld] the memo. It notes that Mills' own cereal produ[cts] Coco Pulfs and Count "questionable nutritiona[l]

Footnote: An Agricul[ture] spokesman said that th[e] written by Genera[l] supervised and e[dited] department. He descri[bed] as a worthwhile el[ement] children on nutrition. A General Mills agree[s] company's aim.